

HERE AND NOW

No.3

Spring 1986.

50p

LIFE IN THE EASTERN BLOC



**POLAND 5 YEARS AFTER •
SOVIET RULING CLASS? • ANIMAL
LIBERATION • LASCH'S NARCISSISM**

HERE & NOW 3

Introduction

Somewhat later than intended, here is the third issue of *Here & Now*. Problems with writing some of the articles have meant that we've fallen one issue behind our original intention of publishing three issues each year.

In previous issues we've asked for outside contributions, and we would repeat that appeal here. A magazine such as this is based on acceptance of a contradictory position: to try to reach people we don't already know we accept that the magazine is distributed as a commodity, despite our antipathy to the commodity as such. Only two things make this acceptable: firstly, that we don't use the magazine to project some false image of ourselves; and secondly, that some kind of dialogue is extended.

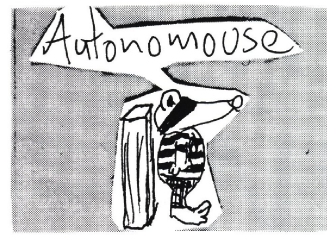
Apparently, we have had more response than is often the case for such magazines. However, that response has often been at a considerable distance from our current concerns. Given the infrequent publication of the magazine, the only way that real debate is going to be maintained is by making the effort to keep in touch between issues. There are discussion articles and translations of interesting material produced between issues, and we'd be prepared to send copies to people who feel that they could make some contribution to developing discussion.

In recent months we've had correspondence with various people on matters arising out of the content of no.2. Because of their length we've been unable to include these here, but would be happy to send copies to interested people. For example, there was an exchange with "A Communist Effort" (now part of Wildcat London) on the whole question of our outlook, and, more recently, an exchange with "The Pleasure Tendency" on matters arising out of their recent pamphlets (mentioned elsewhere in this issue).

Some of the articles in this issue follow on from some such correspondence and from other discussions, while others return to difficult areas touched upon in previous issues (such as the communism / self-management question and our consequent approach to real movements).

HERE AND NOW

LETTER



KNOWLEDGE & CONSUMER SOCIETY An oblique response to *Here & Now* 2: "The Subversive Past", and "The Real Thing".

Another perspective on the success of consumerism is that the growth of information-as-power and the general attitude that a lot is known about everything leaves people with far less certainty about the present and about themselves than they have ever had before [this might indicate a principal fragility of the "consumerist personality"]. As the police, for example, have discovered the immediate effect of huge amounts of information is that you don't know where the hell you are with it, or how to use it. Statistical techniques of data processing can reduce information to norms, trends etc. which may be very interesting but which rarely provide definitive answers to specific questions. The most you get is a statement of the probability of something - in other words uncertainty. There is an air of knowability in our culture but in fact very little is known about anything. Perhaps this is new in the sense that in the past people accepted that most things were unknowable. Now this is no longer so but sophisticated knowledge is either basically unusable or concerns trivia. The superficial attitude that much is known coupled with peoples' awareness of the failure of knowledge in concrete cases facilitates the focussing of attention on petty property and physical appearance - the lowest common denominators of life perhaps but at least entirely knowable.

Capital adapts to this, having encouraged it at least even if it was unpredicted, and democratic socialism collaborates by default in maintaining the materialism of the 19th century.

Facing the past may act against current narcissism but not because concentrating on the trivial present at the expense of the past was created somehow deliberately and intentionally by Capital so as to fit long-term profit motivations (an explanation implicit in *The Subversive Past*). Obviously the changing meaning and perceived implications of knowledge have been intimately connected to the shifting sands of Power, and Capital has kept up with this. The 'authenticity' & value erosion discussed in *The Real Thing* are themselves also correlated with the historical development of the concepts of knowledge & progress that are generally held. That authenticity is

capable of being posited as an aim at all is due to the shortcomings of superficial rationalism in being relevant in peoples' lives [outside of 'intellectual discourse']. This means that the search for authenticity and 'values' might easily resolve in to a quest for alternative illusions.

I wonder if a propaganda strategy intended to derail people from consumer narcissism might best include an emphasis on *The Great Lie Of Knowledge*, that is to undermine the conventional wisdoms of science & government without leading to the fashionable cynicism that amounts to a mask for apathy.

In past times much of the most successful resistance activity was targetted against church & religion - the contemporary repository & arbiter of knowledge. Then as know institutional power tapped the powerlines of knowledge but had to work within that system and was often in conflict with it. The traditions & social conventions of the time [as well as oppositional or revolutionary tendencies] were heavily influenced by or infiltrated with the existing ideology of knowledge. I would urge wariness when arguing for attention to the past, not just to avoid sentimentalism & nostalgia but because the beliefs and attitudes of the past were just as bound up with prevailing power as they are now, however different the content.

Both articles in *Here & Now* 2 mentioned suggest the utter bankruptcy of the commodity society, but it's paradoxical that many who conform to the values of consumerism would agree that those values are totally banal & ultimately worthless. Their intellectual acceptance of such criticism is not matched by their motivation. The "minimal self" clutches at straws in the shape of the products of consumerism, the fashions & fads, in order to avoid the emptiness, apathy & general emotional poverty afflicting the personality. This is the extreme of course, but it's worth keeping in mind that showing the stupidity and tragic global effects of consumer capitalism won't on its own achieve much in changing perceptions of what it might be that should be aimed for in life, let alone how to arrive at such a state.

Shared experience or collective memory or history may have the potential to overcome apathy, isolation & social fragmentation but if they develop within existing power relations they will inevitably be tainted, perhaps fatally. For me this is where 'faith' enters the picture - in trusting and hoping that the necessity of a critical attitude won't spoil the fostering of & participation in a genuine communality of experience & motivation, or reduce it to the rationalised charade that experiments in isolated communalism often seem to result in.

T. Jennings.

A FEW COPIES [honestly!] are LEFT OF ISSUES 1 & 2 [50p or £1 for both incl. postage].

HERE & NOW,
box 2, 340 West Princess St.,
Glasgow G.4.

Hard going for the Left.



The Left are in a state of permanent crisis. What's new?

The Labour Party Conference and the media presentation of Kinnock's 'tough stance' symbolised the arrival of a new strategy to confront and isolate the 'Militant Tendency'. It did so within a necessity, highlighted by the media, and partly obscured during the miners strike, to refashion electoral appeal and focus on the Labour Party as the 'defender of democracy' and shift attention 'centre stage' away from the SDP/Liberal Alliance.

From being eclipsed by Scargill during the miners strike, Kinnock's new profile has coincided with a reconstitution of the 'new left' in general support of so-called 'soft' policies which act as a counterweight to the social democratic wing of the Labour Party (1). The extent to which protests over 'ratecapping' and the deployment of legal sanctions imposed by central government give way to acts of public defiance, represent the willingness of the self-styled 'hard left' to reject Labour's policing role as the upholders of 'reasonable' opposition.

In Liverpool, instead of a polarisation of opinion between the Government and local council with the Labour Party nationally forced to 'take sides' in defence of public services and councillors threatened with legal sanctions, the confrontation was redrawn. Instead, attention was refocused on an 'unresponsive' council led by its 'Militant Tendency' minority being unwilling to put the job security of its council workers before its own personification as martyrs bankrupted by Government cuts in local expenditure and the victim of draconian State controls.

In contrast to the media's presentation during Foot's leadership of a Labour Party torn by internal strife and 'unfit' for Government, the message is that by waging a battle against 'Militant' and supporting expulsions on the grounds of

being a member of the 'Tendency', Labour will be projected as being more electorally credible.

The alliance of the Left as witnessed by Benn's candidature against Healey for the Deputy Leadership election of 1981, and less convincingly during the miners strike, has evaporated. Instead the rump of the 'hard left' in the Party & Unions and gathered around *Labour Herald*, 'Militant' and assorted entrists of more recent origin (such as *Socialist Organiser*) are to be sacrificed to electoral expediency and portrayed as the anti-democratic cancer afflicting the body politic which "exploits the libertarian instincts" of the parliamentary road to socialism.(2)

Apart from the collapse of fragile left alliances in the Labour Party, it is stressed that the Communist Party in its 'front' organisations (such as Broad Left '84 in the CPSA) is identifying with a shift to the 'right' and in favour of a new 'social contract' with Union leaders whose role has been systematically weakened by Government policy (after ensuring great success in increasing the rate of exploitation in the first 2 years of the Callaghan era).

Outwith the Labour Party and projecting itself as the 'revolutionary' pole within the labour movement, the Socialist

Workers Party has attempted to seize the initiative and attract 'Militant' to regroup in a merger of the two largest 'trotskyite'(4) organisations. Their open letters stress: "What is needed to pull together the militant minority is the building of a serious socialist organisation which does not base itself on electoralism".

In Liverpool, this new commitment to realignment amongst 'revolutionary' forces sees the SWP muting its criticism of 'Militant's' tactics in order to display left unity against the media panic (such as the *Liverpool Against Militant* rally). However, Hatton and co. prefer to remain in the Labour Party until thrown out, and have demonstrated a greater ability to organise rallies in the Royal Albert Hall than persuade the workers Liverpool that they should identify with their employers to the extent of placing their own jobs behind the 'fight'.

For 'Militant', the workforce, and working class activity in general, is a tool to be "switched on and off like a tap" (*Workers Voice*). They "felt like a stage army, there to be wheeled out on demonstrations, but never party to decision making"(5). They were divided by patronage and subject to political appointments judged in the interests of the Local State machine. "The council had agreed the bank balancing deal in August, yet it continued to tell the workforce for a further two months that there was no alternative to the bankruptcy option, apart from the Tory government climbing down"(5).

It has been all too evident that "lack of consultation had strengthened passivity. And the manoeuvring of the council & union officials had depoliticised the struggle. All the talk of redundancy notices, capitalisation and all the other jargon had created a mood of fatalism" (*TNS*, 4-10-85). This reaction to the 'lack' of mobilisation and the reliance on 'leadership from above' demonstrated the Revolutionary Communist Party's divergence from the dominant Trotskyite cries to "Stop the Retreat" (SWP). Instead, the RCP prefers to destroy illusions in the Labour Party and construct an image of a "high profile... of popularising Marxism... (to) forge a new anti-capitalist leadership" (*TNS*, Richards 4-10-85).

Far from adopting the 'downturn' mentality which sees the fortunes of the Party as a direct reflection of the resilience of the class struggle, the RCP has opted for a trendy evangelicalism which matches an irreverence for left figureheads like Scargill, Benn & Hatton with a belief that "it is now possible for even a small organisation to challenge Labour's hegemony".

Consequently the dominant Trotskyite position on Elections is no longer useful to the RCP which prefers to demonstrate "Kinnock's election may be essential for the survival of the labour bureaucracy in its present form. But why should the working class have to pay the price" (*TNS*).



Left unity: backing council bosses

Dave Rourke (reflex)

WHY you may ask, pay any attention to the latest goings on in the Left anyway? like it or not, the Leftist group modelled along Bolshevik lines, represents for the vast majority moving towards revolutionary ideas the only visible alternative. What success the leftists have had is in 'front' organisations which seek to capture a popular response of the moment. One year it is Anti-Nazi (posing as democrats against fascist violence), the next CND (posing as peacekeepers against the War-mongering State) and so on.....

The result for the majority is burn-out and withdrawal from a 'political' profile, and here groups like the WRP, Sparticus League and other notorious examples perform yet another useful service in presenting a model of revolutionary commitment that repels all but the most immune to 'realistic' influences in their lives. The spectre of 'alien' groups of directed members isn't helped by the clone like style of expression of



One of the biggest obstacles, is the role of

(7) "How Socialist is the SWP?" Wildcat Pamphlet 30p incl. post from PO Box 294, Newcastle Under Lyme, ST5 1SS.



Riots and their Respondents.



Headlines and events come and go in the media with increasing rapidity. However we can expect the aura of the riots during last autumn in Britain to stay with us for some time, if not always, in headline print.

The suddenness of the three major riots all occurring one after another in Handsworth, Brixton and Tottenham, evoked the memory of 1981 in the media in such a way that it was as if all events in between had had little significance other than being responses to, or of a weakening of, the moral hold of respect for Authority. Blame is either put on the criminalisation of young blacks in particular or on the lack of provisions in social services, the shortcomings of urban planning, and cuts associated with Monetarist policies.

Both sets of views act on a thriving, if somewhat ambiguous, moral conviction for social justice within society. The pendulum swing between the demand for greater law and order enforcement and a liberalisation of power and attitudes towards social spending is part of the same consciousness that upholds the image of respectability within society.

It is because the riots diminish this image, not simply because of the moral wrongs associated with violence and lawlessness, that they make headlines. The respectability associated with postwar Britain as ideologically a peaceful democratic society is openly defied with the hurling of petrol bombs and the use of shot-guns against the police.

Trying to explain why the riots happened is the job of those who want to contain them and restore normality or to gain political power or standing from other people's

actions. The idea that "riots are politics carried out by other means" is wrong and an attitude symptomatic of "sociological" liberal and Social Democratic analysis.

The fact that both the traditional Left and those whose politics is influenced by the spell of "60s radicalism" fail to have any lasting relevance in most people's lives clearly shows a contradiction in the politics; where there is often a conflict between the ideal and the effects austerity has thrust on many people.

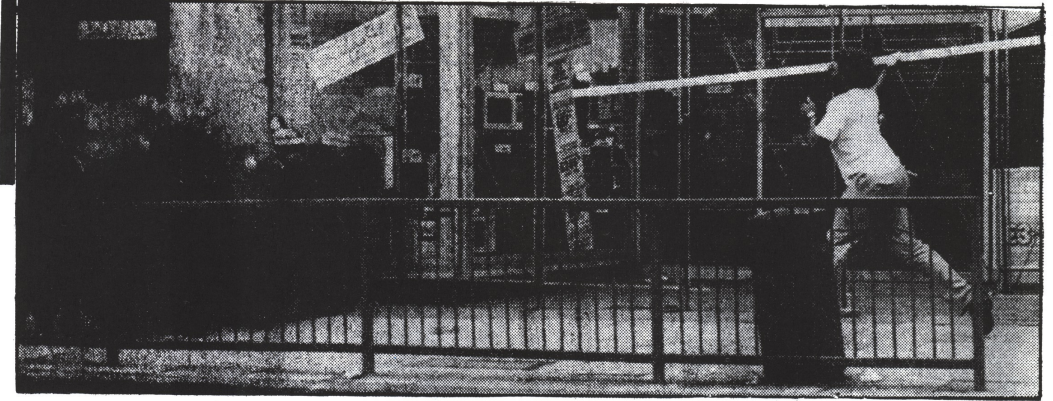
Although it would be an oversimplification to suggest that these riots reflect a growing depoliticisation, with the contained sphere of political substitution and manipulation, along with a cynicism about those who try to "intervene" in others' lives, it has to be recognised that these riots are isolated from other forms of discontent (even though retrospectively they may come to represent the "epoch" of the 80s). Coming less than a year after one of the most intense strikes in Britain's history, it would be easy to say that discontent seen among mining communities had spilled over into the inner-cities. Yet in both 1981 and 1985, riots in the major cities were not linked to industrial disputes or political campaigns. Instead they appear to be moving against the grain of politics and do not show any concrete signs of a growing working-class consciousness. There were no riots in the cities during the miners' strike, to speak of. One could blame such things as the set-up and control imposed by trade unionism, the conflicting interests between people in work and those who are unemployed competing for fewer jobs, or racial discrimination within the workplace (not only by management). However the disparity may be more complex.

A definition of all forms of protest as "political" from some moral or ideological standpoint would see things this way. But rioting can be used by any group of people and be interpreted to support whatever justifiable or dubious grievance. It can also arise spontaneously in mob situations without any particular political aim. Thus rioting disobeys political definitions and campaigns. One example of this was experienced by the Communist Party, who, in trying to organise "impressive campaigns" of community resistance in Tulse Hill (near Brixton) against the closure of a sub-Post Office, found that during the riot members of the local community did their own bit of organising and burnt the place down (*MARXISM TODAY* Nov.85). An example of the lack of class solidarity was shown by the strike and demonstration by local council workers in Brixton against comments made by Councillor Bernie Grant.

This sort of thing reflects the biggest dilemma for the Left: that all sorts of different protests can coincide - strikes, riots, symbolic protests (CND, Anti-Apartheid, etc) - thus giving the appearance of a rising tide of dissent, yet at the same time serving up a bitter illusion, frustrating the political aims of groups and adding to their unpopularity.

With the exception of the Right, who are quite deliberate in blaming riots on the "permissive society" and Anarchist agitators, an attitude which is not as stupid as it would seem, there have been a number of other common responses.

The first, somewhat expectedly, is that derived from a sociological perspective - the desire to categorise people and society and the need to find explanations, yet being unable to (eg *New Society*, *Guardian*, etc). This response and the scientific approach is also used



by the Left to provide themselves with "obvious explanations": Institutional Racism, Youth and Black Unemployment, Police Thuggery, Bad Housing, etc.

Another response which has received some attention has been that of those who uncritically rejoice over the riots - a typical anarchist response, characterised most clearly by **Class War**, whose dream of riot-like acts escalating into insurrection from the emergence of a new class of marginalised groups of people labelled as the working class, rests on a somewhat manipulative attitude of attention-seeking, adulation of violence and thuggery in themselves as being the highest expression of class warfare, and a reduction of politics to that of "toe cap" pranks and posturing vengeance. All of which may represent the antithesis of all things respectable - but represents nothing more, with its over-emphasis on the effects of spontaneous actions and a reliance on media images.

More important is how the State sees these riots. Not as a threat to the Ruling Class, that's for sure. The attitude of the police which came to light during the inquest into the death of Cynthia Jarret showed that they knew that their action could provoke a riot but, rather than take measures to avoid confrontation, they seemed quite prepared to accept trouble.

It is not simply a question of testing tactics and strategies against a hostile population. The police have on the whole managed to keep the riots within specific areas, although not without a fight. Rather than just a heavy-handed response, the policy seems to be to use protest and discontent to support the system. By reacting to opposition against themselves, the authorities are trying to present

themselves as a reasonable body forced into reacting with more authority and excusing more violence by their agents. (Plastic bullets look like being the next weapon to be put into use.)

The seemingly-stupid naivety of the likes of Tebbit and Jeffrey Archer and their comments give the appearance of not being able to control the situation, yet they also act as a bluff to cover the more sophisticated power that is being exercised. We would not be surprised to see another major riot in the lead-up to the next General Election - we are not suggesting that the riots are deliberately created by the State but simply that they are much more attuned to responding to discontent to their advantage.

References are continually made to criminal attitudes and their territory: the inner cities, mining communities, the terraces... For the majority of people the riots are meant to be experienced as very real in the spectacular sense - to legitimise more control, but also detached and bottled-up within particular ghettos. Yet, of course, the new Public Order Bill and the strengthening of authority will affect everyone and not just those for whom they are supposedly justified.

Any answers as to where the riots lead begs the question: for whom? Those who are rioting, do they see what they are doing as political? Quotes like "We don't give a shit, that's all, it's a revolution" could just be responses to prying journalists. We don't criticise people for rioting. The welcome sight of the police getting hurt as they did in Tottenham can only be seen as positive by those who want to see an end to this society. Yet to draw implications from these events just to give meanings to one's political thoughts and

activities can only be a sign of desperation in a very real sense, given the sophistication of the State's response.

Perhaps what is most important for us is what riots have come to represent: a challenge to respectability that has been taken up as the event rather than what is happening day-by-day outside the context of TV cameras. Until people stop relating opposition to society through what can be seen rather than what can be done, anti-capitalist ideas will not find their place alongside people's actions. K. H.

Letter November '85.

THE opinion here amongst the magazine is very positive. I am personally very pleased to see some serious treatment of contemporary issues something sadly lacking here. I personally find the Canadian & U.S. papers & magazines far better.

I am concerned of your dismissiveness of what I see as one of the strengths of anarchism - its tolerance. I think it is important to encourage diversity since we do not intend to impose a monolithic society on people based on the rightness of 'our' analysis. I do share your feeling of exasperation sometimes at the anti-intellectualism, but I do sympathise with it. Many people feel there is too much talk & theory and not enough practice. I feel people need a lot of convincing that theoretical discussion will actually aid action!

I also urge you not to fall into economic class theory which I feel is the weakness of Marxism. We have to come to terms with oppression in all its terms & relate it to power. This makes social psychological considerations important especially in terms of describing the origins & development or hierarchy especially along sexual & racial lines. Also I think there is little discussion of how or why some people end up as radical critics of the society in which they are socialised. What makes some people interpret their experience in such radical terms.

T.S., Stirling,

Animal liberation.

Over the past couple of years, movements for animal liberation have become the most conspicuous "oppositional" campaigns in Britain, taking the place of those against nuclear power and weaponry. Every weekend brings the release of animals from scientific laboratories or factory farms, with a press release of posed photos of balaclavad "guerrillas" ready for page 5 in Monday's paper.

Among libertarians, there's little expressed opposition to such groups and their actions; the people and their ideas may be naive and irritating, but there's a residual respect for the risks they take, if for nothing else. More than that, though, the very act of recourse to "direct action", the litmus test of radicalism, seems to show that these people are receptive to arguments which will make them move from a partial critique of society to a total one.

But what is the likelihood of such a change taking place? Do the tactics of the liberationists (with a petition in one hand and a freed mink in the other) with their reliance on publicity and self-conscious emulation of the 70s urban-guerrilla groups really go beyond symbolic action? Doesn't this uncritical imitation of the heroic pose, the single worst aspect of 70s radicalism, indicate a lack of capacity to go beyond the partial?

The crudity of many of the actions (eg freeing minks to terrorise the countryside) show a certain city-dwellers' ignorance of life in the wild, and an over-acceptance of Walt Disney's version. A similar ignorance was exhibited in Greenpeace's recent campaign against seal-trapping in Arctic Canada, in ignorance of the reliance of the Eskimos on this for their very survival (other than drinking themselves to death in government reservations) - a campaign which now seems to have been abandoned. Divorced from such cruelty, the city-dweller tries to legislate his or her morality onto everyone.

The moral system which suggests that people can only be free if all animals are free is a last attempt to locate the privileged class which exploits no-one or nothing and can therefore carry through the revolution.

Can we have anything to do with a moral system



I wouldn't be at all concerned if a vivisector was killed, compared with the death and suffering they cause to millions of animals.

- Animal Liberation Front spokeswoman

which bases itself on a concern for life in the abstract rather than the concrete (seen also in the Vatican attitude to human life)? The freedom which we want is a purposeful freedom: life as the potential for bringing about change individually and collectively. It is this definition which separates us from the ethic which starts from giving freedom to a group which can do nothing with it. (This is not to argue in favour of cruelty to animals: if people torture cats, for example, this is an exertion of power by the powerless, a transposition of rage which we want nothing to do with).

The most positive aspect of the liberationist campaigns is located where their greatest error can also be seen. The liberationists base themselves on an outrage against a "truth" perceived behind the shining polythene on the supermarket shelves, in the seemingly-agnostic commodity from which all traces of its' production have been erased. Not only have all traces of the labour (and its' relations) disappeared, but also the traces of the raw materials from which the product was formed.

Would the car, for example, be seen as such a good thing if there was a

general awareness of life on the production line? For the liberationists, it is not the nature of the human labour involved in the commodity which causes outrage but the raw material, perceived to be measured entirely in animal suffering. Such a way of thinking has a certain power because it permits a position to be taken on everything, a confidence that behind every great commodity there's a suffering animal. (It is the global nature of this meaning which is its' attraction to the adolescent young, searching for a way into a seemingly hermetically-sealed society, dominated by trivia and status-battles. The campaign which delivers such a meaning acts as a rite-of-passage in the modern post-religious world.)

For us, however, this outlook is wrong. For all the value in attacking the commodity's image and the excesses of instrumental science, what is at work here is a transposition of the discontents of life under capital onto mutely-suffering animals instead of onto human individuals.

A. D.

REVIEWS.

There has been some interesting material in the past year in the **Edinburgh Review** (£2.95 from 1 Buccleuch Place, Edinburgh EH8 9LW). An editorial proposes that "links must be made between the generations politicised by the Spanish Civil War, by the student movements of the late 60s, and by the collapse of employment and protest in the past 8 years". If the magazine's slogan "To gather all the rays of culture into one" has totalitarian overtones, the desire for an analysis which "must juggle difference, cope with contradictions and not try to dissolve ambiguity into unity" goes some way to clear them.

An acknowledged precedent for this project is Trocchi's **project sigma** in the mid-60s. However his idea of "the spontaneous university as a possible detonator of the invisible insurrection" lapsed all too easily into "cosmonauts of inner space" drug reverie. The magazine seems to be trying to reclaim the best part of that project while bearing in mind that "the structure of consumption itself was not subverted in any way in the sixties".

Apart from short stories and poetry, recent issues have included a late interview with Foucault (on homosexual identity) and features on contemporary German and American women writers and on the Hegelian influence in 19th century Scottish philosophy and religion.

The most recent issue includes an interview with James Kelman, an attack on the Cambridge structuralists (Colin McCabe, etc) and a reconsideration of the Utopian and Apocalyptic, which sees the utopian as an attempt to suppress social conflict by setting out an ideal city - "a police action against the radical challenge" of the apocalyptic.

The concept of politics hasn't yet gone beyond a vague approval of the Scottish Socialist/Communist Left (and certainly hasn't questioned their responsibility for the state of things). However the magazine does make a welcome change from complacent acceptance of parochial "Scottish" identity in its attempt to build a faceted and international outlook based on the particularities of Scottish life.



Counter-Information (free for SAE or donation from Box 81, 43 Candlemakers Row, Edinburgh) numbers 8 and 9 of the popular broadsheet highlighting various acts of resistance worldwide. No.8 includes a participant's account of the riot in Brixton, while newly-published no.9 includes a lengthy analysis of

The Pleasure Tendency (PO Box 109, Leeds LS5 3AA) have recently published two free pamphlets, each containing two long articles.

the printers' dispute at Wapping by Scumboli (ex-Workers' Playtime - a posthumous issue is being prepared!) and an article from Autonomia Operaia on the latest mass student protests in Italy.

available through **Loompanics** in Washington State.

LIBERTARIAN RAT-RACE

Most of the mail and exchanges of publications which we receive contain at least a modicum of interest although we don't always have the linguistic skills to translate everything.

But a minority of the stuff is just plain loopy and can only have resulted from a misreading of even a basic interpretation of what we are getting at. Not wishing to have to publish an "As We Don't See It" (as the London Solidarity group did 17 years ago), we offer instead some of the more choice examples to public scrutiny.

The most common are invites by Anarchist Groups to "reclaim the city/ demonstrate your love... be there - hit it" (Brum @), as one example put it, and are derived from our inclusion in the ragbag of the libertarian mileau.

Then we too got the national mailing of the **English National Party**, featuring a contributor who starts "Picking up Mein Kampf the other day..." and proceeds with a bunker mentality, the usual racist ravings spiced with eccentric solutions like resettling the Ulster Protestants in England or Scotland!

More interesting, and offering a rare insight into the Survivalist and competitive ideologies that typify a vocal minority in the USA, was the catalogue of titles

Numerous titles on "guerrilla Capitalism" proclaim that "the 'black' market as every libertarian knows, is merely the real market driven underground by government controls" and sells would-be exploiters ways to evade tax and a philosophy that "nice guys fail in small businesses".

Pacifists would shake in their socks at the books selling the need to arm the family with every gun, knife or aggressive art to equip the log fortress out in the wilds. In heading for the hills marijuana helps pass these idle moments when you aren't making money or brushing up on the latest guerrilla warfare guides. For the intellectual, Murray Rothbard, the guru of the "Minimal State" libertarian right, rubs shoulders with the forerunner of Individualist Anarchism, Benjamin Tucker, the sociologists Berger and Luckmann, and (horror of horrors) Raoul Vaneigem, whose treatise, "The Revolution of Everyday Life", is seemingly ripe for recuperation by anti-State rightists!

The convergence of interest of certain "anarchists" with the survivalist/ rugged individualist Right is based in a fascination with conspiratorial methods and an underlying patriotic "citizens militia" approach to foreign powers. The abyss and carnage of world war is seen as inevitable and a well-prepared minority will carry a "new world" in their hearts and guns, while the mass of humanity are sacrificed as pawns on the chessboard of big-power diplomacy.

POLAND TODAY

In 1985 the underground Solidarnosc was unable to organise any large-scale actions: all attempts to organise strikes failed; demos for the 1st of May and for the 4th anniversary of the signing of the Government/Solidarnosc contract on 1st August 1981 were not substantially supported; and participation in any such event sank sharply compared to 1982 for example.

Most people no longer seem interested in even following the police "hunt" for Biyak, the then-President of Solidarnosc Warsaw, who went underground four years ago. Indeed, many Poles are no longer aware which Solidarnosc leaders are in prison, which of them are free, and which of them are still operating clandestinely.

The majority of the population have given up all hope of getting any change in the system. Nor do they believe - even more sceptically - that an "illegally" working Solidarnosc could have any influence on Government thinking. However, at least most people do realise that underground work is going on and many people contribute in one way or another. Money for Solidarnosc is still being collected at most workplaces and being put to various uses, for example: marriages, births, funerals are subsidised, should a worker require; or the court costs for political trials are paid for, the families of imprisoned workers are helped out and families made destitute by a political sacking are given financial aid. The money is also used to finance underground publications.

The setting-up of this long chain of underground presses is without a doubt one far-reaching consequence from the tempestuous times of the "legal" Solidarnosc - a new phenomenon not only in Poland but also in other so-called socialist countries. Of course there have always been underground presses in all the socialist countries but, except for Poland, they have had very little impact. They were mostly typewritten information-sheets read only by a few initiates. The bulletins of the KOR (the Committee for the Defence of Workers) in the second half of the seventies belonged to this genre - as did the reports of the group DiP (experience and Future), which at the time were highly regarded by the intelligentsia.

Today each town puts out its own



Polish Intro:

The three articles on Poland published here look at diverse aspects of Polish life, but a common thread runs through them all. "Mass Movements and Contradiction" emphasises the part played in the workers' movement by the desire for a more open and diverse society. In "Poland Today" Jakub B., a one-time Solidarnosc militant, examines what is perhaps the chief legacy of that concern - the astonishing flourishing of an extensive underground press in contemporary Poland. In the third article, "The Fireside Narcotic", Mephistopheles examines one aspect of the "normalisation" process of the Jaruzelski regime, which can perhaps be seen as its response to these demands - the Westernisation of the Mass Media and the encouragement of consumerism.

information bulletin of 2-4 pages with a circulation of anything from a few to a few thousand. Since the print-run is never high enough to cope with demand, each copy is read by several readers and handed on. These bulletins are published irregularly (on average once or twice a week) and the printing techniques are similarly erratic - from high-quality duplication to primitive Banda-ing, by machine and by hand - but all of them are financially supported by Solidarnosc. The picture is different where magazines, journals and even books are concerned, which are distributed by so-called "colporteurs" for anything up to 100% more than the equivalent shop price. The periodicals - sometimes of extremely high quality, thought there are of course differences - contain social, political and literary material and most the articles are at least half theoretical, dealing with themes such as international and Polish history, the relations between Poland and the Soviet Union, the crisis of really-existing socialist countries and the East-West confrontation. Needless to say however, the most frequent themes discussed are the history of Solidarnosc and the

State of Emergency declared in Poland in 1981. Also included are the memoirs of ex-politicians, as well as short stories and poems.

It is also possible to obtain - on the underground market - journals which are published abroad, eg "Kultura" in Paris and "Aneks" in London. For their own personal safety Polish authors living in Poland will arrange to have their articles appear in such publications.

There are a few dozen publishers working in the underground who specialise in books. Usually it is almost impossible to correctly identify the actual press since deliberately false names etc are used to confuse the Polish Secret Police. Two of the most important are "Nowa" and "Krag" (Circle).

At this point I would like to mention one publishing press that has a rather curious modus operandi: "Oficina Liberalow", which deals mainly with the propagation of classical liberal ideas. Its boss and owner still works for the

CONTINUED PAGE 14, LOWER HALF

MASS MOVEMENTS AND CONT

Henri Simon's "Poland 1980-1982: Class Struggle and the Crisis of Capital" is the only full-length libertarian account of the Solidarnosc epoch available now in English. As such, it not only reveals the strengths of a libertarian approach to mass movements but also displays some of the pitfalls into which we can be led.

Its strength lies in its insistence that such movements are not the creation of a handful of "leaders" but are driven by the desires, the skills and the knowhow of the mass of ordinary people. It provides an effective counter-balance to the starstruck accounts of Solidarnosc which have tended to give greater prominence to biographies of Walesa than specific accounts of how the rank-and-file actually conducted the day-to-day struggle.

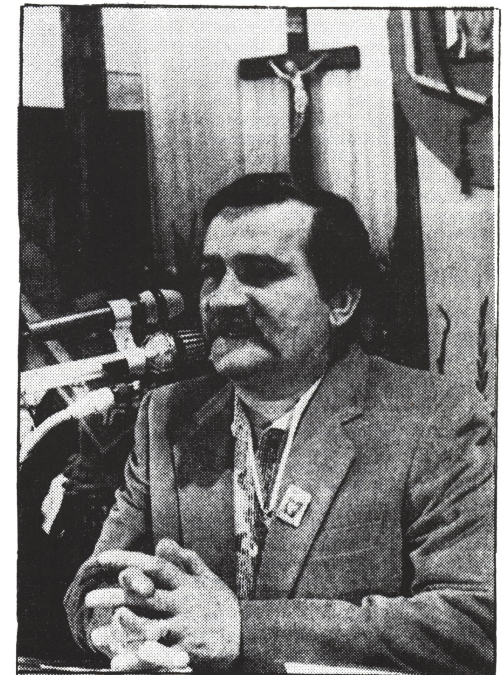
Its weaknesses may at first sight seem trivial in comparison to the virtue of the central proclamation of the leading role of the common people. They lie in a tendency to reduce complex events to straightforward ones; to gloss over facts which do not fit the central thesis; to draw events in black-and-white which require numerous subtle gradations of grey for accurate representation.

What in the end makes this book a less than satisfactory account of the Polish events is the seeming compulsion to punt certain ideas fixes at all costs and as often as possible. The problem is that whatever truths lie in the principle notions which Simon proclaims (and there is a kernel of truth in each of them) the method employed to establish that truth is that of over-simplification or reduction. For example, Simon is determined to make the point that the Polish workers were fighting Capitalism; in essence the same Capitalism as we face here, with only the forms of domination differing. It's an old argument of course - what exactly is the nature of Soviet-style societies? But it seems to me that Simon uses the label to iron-out massive differences in the realities of different societies. He talks of the Eastern and Western wings of Capital almost as if the only differences lay in their location. This is to minimise differences which to those involved loomed as large as any underlying similarities. For these differences manifest themselves not least in the conscious aims of the Polish workers, eg in their recurring demands for freedom of speech, of the press, and for the unhindered distribution of economic information.

A more fundamental weakness of the book is its failure to come to terms with the nature of mass movements. His tendency is to portray the Polish movement as consisting of a near-homogenous mass of workers, ever-resourceful, more radical than their so-called leaders, and one in purpose. The contradictions, the inconsistencies, the diversity of vision and motivation which are inevitable features of any real mass movement are skated over.

One way this is done is to artificially place certain groups and individuals outside the "real" movement. For example:

"It was not KOR and the handful of "free unionists" which precipitated the struggle and turned it into the tidal wave which effectively brought down the entire regime. It was rather the groundswell which



opened the way for new structures among which the unions were one of the key elements." (p25)

True enough - at the same time KOR and the free unionists were in themselves part of this groundswell, a groundswell which also contained Polish nationalists, Catholic socialists, and economic liberals.

Simon's need to drive a wedge between a "leadership" (always devious, reformist and untrustworthy) and a "rank-and-file" (clearsighted, revolutionary, solid) leads him to distort real events. He writes the period immediately following the Gdansk accords:

"But now the work was resumed in Gdansk (the Polish workers) had to renounce their own demands and adopt the union's, they had to submerge their own rank-and-file organisations in hierarchical structures which issued orders and precise instructions for action: they had to go back to work and again labour for the prosperity of a system in which they once more counted for little."

They didn't have to at all. There was nothing in the founding of Solidarnosc nor anything in the Gdansk accords which required that it be the "one true union". Far from being forced to become part of Solidarnosc, workplace organisations all over Poland flocked unbidden to affiliate with it. They could have formed their own unions or they could have stayed outside unions altogether. They didn't: they affiliated to Solidarnosc.

Tendencies within the Polish working-class which don't quite comply with Simon's internationalist perceptions have to be explained away. This is his account of the dedication of the memorial to the

RADITION: POLAND 1980-82

Gdansk martyrs:

"...Oppressors and workers, gunmen and their prey, executioners and widows of victims... all intoning the national anthem and all blessed by the Church, by Solidarity and by the Party. A workers' defeat was enacted here. Whenever Capital is threatened by both the Class Struggle and its own problems it turns to the old familiar ideology: national unity for the salvation of the endangered fatherland."

It won't do.

Whatever way you look at it, there was a strong element of nationalism in the motivation of the rebellious working class. They needed no encouragement from the ruling class, who on the contrary were alarmed by obvious manifestations of Polish nationalism, manifestations which might tempt the wrath of their Russian masters.

Simon seems to want to have it both ways. Only the workers saw to the heart of the matter; only they could respond in a pure fashion to the situation in which they found themselves. Yet at all points he has them duped by scheming priests, politicians and unionists. The desire to attribute all error to "leaders" and all wisdom to "the rank-and-file" touches on the absurd in his account of the Solidarnosc congress in September-October 1981. Here, he tells us, we can see the duplicity of the leadership most clearly. He quotes someone he refers to only as "one militant Gwiazda" as saying:

"In the last six months the union representatives no longer speak the member's language but the government's. That language is not understood."

In the very next sentence he writes that the Solidarnosc leadership had exhibited "its scorn for the rank-and-file; first in March when the General Strike was called off..." What he neglects to say is that the man who actually read out the statement calling off the strike was this same Gwiazda, not just a militant but the founder of the Free Trade Unions of the Baltic Coast. A man passionately against the calling-off of the strike yet probably second only to Walesa in the unofficial union hierarchy, he was the most prominent exponent of radical grass-roots democracy as the means of organising the union.

The statement Simon quotes was not an isolated one by a disillusioned "militant" but part of a debate which raged within Solidarnosc from the beginning about the relationship of the apparatus to the rank-and-file. In the aftermath of the calling-off of the strike, the National Co-ordinating Commission of Solidarnosc was all but rent apart and the public face of the union, Karol Modzewleski, its Press Spokesman, resigned in disgust.

So what? Certainly not that Solidarnosc was after all the vehicle for communist revolution and certainly not that tendencies towards hierarchy within Solidarnosc were in any way positive. The point is rather that as a model of what happened in Solidarnosc, a movement encompassing some 10 million people, the leadership - rank-and-file dichotomy is inadequate. In such movements there are myriad visions, motivations, and tendencies, and in Poland, as I suspect at all revolutionary moments, the contradictions manifested themselves everywhere and at all levels. The attempt to impose upon revolutionary upheavals an over-riding unifying view has led time and time again to the horror of the totalitarian state. Simon ignores the obsession with open-ness and plurality which manifested itself at all levels of Polish society. Perhaps it is the very confusion of mass revolutionary upheaval, the flowering of diversity wherein lies the hope of such times. And clearly this leaves us with acute problems.

The way Simon has chosen to deal with these problems is reductionist. In responding to real events we can either treat them as separate unique occasions having their own special characteristics, test our perceptions against them and accommodate our schemata to them as necessary or we can accommodate the events to our existing schemata, squeezing them into a shape which will fit our previous model of what should be.

The schemata with which Simon has approached the Polish events are as follows:- Capital is a global system; institutionalised opposition to Capital is always recuperated; only the spontaneous unmediated overthrow of Capital by the working class will bring about a free communist world; and the working class



Cont.
PAGE 12.

in struggle always reveals that it already has in itself the knowledge, desire and ability to destroy Capitalism.

I share the first three of these; it's only with the last that I part company with him. Because it's blatantly obvious that nowhere in the world - Poland, Italy, Britain - **nowhere**, is there a unifying working-class consciously proclaiming itself loudly for the abolition of Capital and the State and for the global institution of communism, Simon has to fall back on the idea which underpins all spontaneist models of revolution. Since the Polish workers seem to hold beliefs which not only differ from those we would **like** them to have but also in logic contradict one another, Simon has to maintain that **unconsciously** they are revolutionaries of the right stripe:

"The same people who one day supported the union, demonstrated behind the Polish flag and piously took communion in front of factories during a strike, were shamelessly robbing the State and were constantly scheming against the system of exploitation on an earlier day and will abandon the union, will burn flags and churches in the fight for their own interests on the day when they find the organised force of the union, army, or church in their way and they will probably still believe in them when they do it."

This, interestingly, is just about the only place that Simon recognises that they **were** the same people. He doesn't examine the ideas that were consciously held by the workers (or anyone else) at all.

If we'd asked a Polish worker what sort of society he would have liked to emerge from the 80-81 struggle, the likelihood is that he would have envisaged some form of parliamentary democracy in tandem with a system of economic self-management at the enterprise level. The specific demands raised time and time again in Poland were for institutional guarantees of freedom of speech and the unhindered distribution of information; for free trade unions; for democracy at all levels in the society; for better pay, working conditions and welfare provisions; and for workers' self-management. These demands did not arise in Poland for the first time in 1980 but arose out of previous struggles, and some of them were to be found in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968. Heller and Feher have pointed to this demand for a dual system of political pluralism and workers' councils in Hungary: with even a little imagination it's easy to see why demands such as these might come about in a society where the power that is aspires to total control.

But this would only have been the median of the various consciously expressed desires to be found in Poland. Some workers would have advocated an expansive Polish nationalism: others, especially in the Lodz area, would have opposed representative democracy and advocated "the democracy of workers' councils".

The point is that if we proceed with an analytic view of mass movements which looks for an underlying unifying dynamic, even at the expense of, or in contradiction to, consciously expressed ideas, we are in great danger of doing down the class we seek to advance by envisaging it as an undifferentiated mass. Simon, in his eagerness to show the working class as autonomous and revolutionary, risks portraying its members as automata whose consciously expressed motivations conceal the fact that regardless of consciousness they are **inevitably** revolutionary. For Simon's actions speak louder than words and the workers, by their actions, reveal themselves utterly opposed to the system they confront. Thus, although an individual Pole might think he is a Catholic,

might consider the expulsion of all Russian influence from his soil to be the number 1 priority of his movement, and might consider a pluralist democracy to be a good thing, he reveals by his actions that he is in his soul a communist. And he is so, because in acting in his own interests (as he **must**) he will tend to overthrow the Capitalist State.

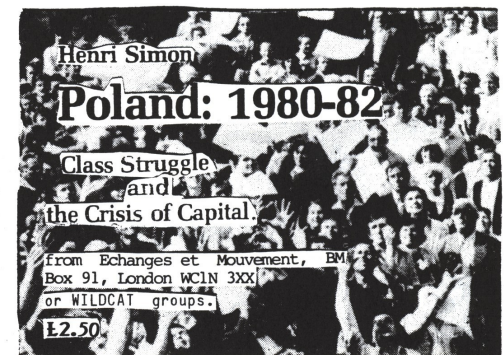
"To do and not just think about something that makes one's work and life easier is acting in one's class interest and undermining the foundations of the Capitalist system." (p86)

One problem with theory is that it tends to the analytic, seeking single explanations for complex situations. I know of little evidence that Poles were much interested in theory. The struggle was visualised in terms of "society" (diverse, voluntaristic) and "the power" (that which tends towards sameness and force) - and they made a virtue of inconsistency. Simon recognises that the great buzzword of the time was "democracy", although a democracy more far-reaching than anything which passes for such on this side of the Iron Curtain. I do not believe that this was the key word because the Poles did not know of any better words. In its use, and in the practise of Solidarnosc, there was an insistence on plurality, a recognition of, a **rejoicing** in the diversity of opinion which Solidarnosc encompassed.

It is impossible to conceive of a meaningful freedom without diversity and we must therefore recognise the very diversity of mass movements as positive in itself. It is time we stopped speaking and writing as if mass movements can be seen as great homogeneous blobs which either share an identical revolutionary consciousness or share an identical revolutionary imperative which is somehow outside of and independent of consciousness. Ten million people acting in identity of conscious or unconscious motivation is a fantasy of social theorists. It is the dream of the totalitarian, the one in pursuit of which oceans of blood have been spilled.

This is a long way from Simon, who is about as far from being a totalitarian as it is possible to be. He advocates nearly everything I believe in: he is for the abolition of wage labour and the commodity; he believes in our ability to run our own affairs without benefit of experts or leaders; much of the time he is right about what went on in Solidarnosc. What is disappointing about this book is that he seems to feel the need to offer such a smoothed-out version of events to support his views. Ambiguities, inconsistencies, paradoxes will always face us in times of great mass insurrection. They are not to be feared. In reduced perceptions of human activity lies the possibility of the attempt to reduce human activity to fit perception.

T. D.



THE FIRESIDE NARCOTIC

Not Only in Poland

What I don't want to do is to talk about the power-block politics of the USSR - the Poles of my acquaintance, preferring to consider themselves somehow geographically integrated **within** and not appended to West Europe, don't anyway...with breathtaking indifference. I won't look at the strange two-economy system either, except to say that 35% of all working people now operate independently of the State (ie privately), and that an estimated \$3 billion fuel the black economy, ie the black market itself, smuggling, foraging trips abroad, connections, bribes, moonlighting, etc, etc.

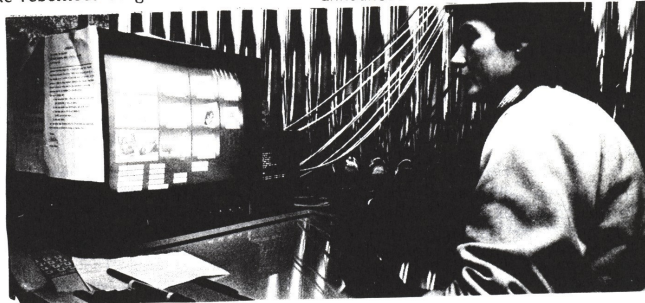
Nor will I have to depict how Polish workers on an average monthly wage of approx. 18,000 zloty (£80) struggle against more or less Europrices - readers can work that out for themselves. Neither do I wish to elaborate on the (for me) very depressing fact that State Socialism seems to produce in its citizens the most perfect consumerist mentality imaginable: an adman's paradise - no Greens, no "Which"-type agencies, no questions... just an insatiable hunger for any goods, particularly those from "capitalist" countries. (In fact, in my opinion, nutcase anti-communists could easily destabilise the Eastern Bloc countries by blanket-bombing them not with explosives but Wranglers, tights, Rothmans, calculators, oranges and genuine Scotch whisky - you can forget SDI).

No, what I want to talk about here and now is: entertainment in Poland ie cinema, disco, radio and mostly TV.

When I was there, the Polish cinemas were showing nearly all the currently-available films in the UK - especially the blockbusters (pun intended) Superman II, Star Wars 678. Gremlins, etc; also a Polish film entitled in English "Yesterday", which significantly had something to do with the Beatles influence in Poland; and another whose title I've forgotten which dealt - resignedly - with the aftermath of Solidarnosc. According to some sources this film has caused the Polish Military Government some discomfort, but I

sometimes wonder whether dictatorships occasionally pretend to be indignant - if only to present a concerned image...after all the film was made and is being shown, so it can't be all that inflammatory.

In the discos in the PRP you can dance to all the video-clips shown on "Top of the Pops" - Billy Ocean's egregious "Suddenly" was very popular for some reason - and on the radio two or three channels churn out a largely British-oriented record selection of groups like Pink Floyd, Genesis, Stones, Deep Purple, Yes and so on in the Sixties direction. Admittedly, every so often the music/pap is interrupted by an enthralling account of the latest visit to the PRP by a delegation of the Tunisian Communist Party, whereupon my friends simply switch to another station for another fake-rebellious song.



Poland, incidentally, is said to be partner to all international copyright agreements, from which we can deduce that rock-pop-pap not only keeps us in the capitalist countries happy and emasculated, but in the socialist countries too - an insight superbly demonstrated by the fact that on Sunday mornings, when you should be going to church, Polish radio puts out its best funky music uninterrupted by reports about the most recent achievements of the Manx Communist Party.

I take it that the reader is now beginning to get my drift: that in order to buy off the intrinsic rebelliousness of the Polish people, as exemplified by Solidarnosc, the Polish Military / Communist Government has since 1981 skilfully and cynically arranged a narcoticisation of the public by tolerating / providing

American and British entertainment. In all fairness to my Polish friends I must add that they were quite insulted when I put this view to them. They argued - a bit romantically and ingrained-marxistically - that the Polish people had "historically" fought for these rights. The right to watch Superman; the right to wear Levis; the right to fall asleep to Pink Floyd; the right to drink Cola - West Poland is a Pepsi franchise, East Poland a Coca-Cola one - I'm not joking.

Nevertheless, I want to turn my argument back onto British society by taking a look at the Polish TV "News at 19.30". This daily half-hour main news bulletin is presented by two readers - a male and a female -which, symbolically, equals **balance** - just like "News at Ten".

After the initial headlining (means: **important, dramatic, not-to-be-missed**), the first story (such an appropriate word) usually devotes itself to how the military/communist government is getting on incredibly well with either the new post-Solidarnosc trade-union representatives or, for that matter, with the Church. Then government successes are announced - such as their new

agreement with FIAT to carry on for the next 20 years or so producing under franchise the "little Fiat" (126).

This news item itself - reported over a period of two or three days as a victory for socialism - is in itself a triumphant metaphor for the paucity of state socialist thinking. It's a lousy car, absolutely unsuitable for any family numbering more than two, but it's sold (for the equivalent of £20,000: remember the average monthly wage) as the perfect vehicle for a socialist family. Indeed, it is a perfect vehicle - for the contempt which the rulers in Poland, driving their Mercs or Volvos, hold for the ruled. And, metaphorically, proof that the state-socialist regime will continue - without a gram of imagination - to churn out the

rubbish of the last 20 years for at least the next 20 years.

But back to the Polish news: after the state's self-glorification slot comes a review of the news from the capitalist countries - nothing but disasters: earthquakes, forest fires, floods, tornados, plane crashes (get the picture?), or details of fascism, inflation or unemployment. However little analysis is attempted on these points: they are merely depicted as ineradicably natural facts - like earthquakes.

Following that, there might be a report about record productivity in truck-shunting in a village north of Poznan or an interview with an extremely-old high-up Russian.

And finally, to round off everything not too seriously, there's a light item (juggling dogs etc) or sport - just like "News at Ten", concluding with the weather (equals: It's all so natural).

I hope I've made my point: the presentation of TV news in Poland is not substantially different from the structuring of the news on British TV. The function is the

same: to propagate an essentially-Ruling Class view of the world (perhaps spiced with the occasional criticism) in a none-too-informative, non-analytic and pacifying way - all embedded in a fairly-anodyne framework.

Similarly, on Saturday evenings the Polish news is simultaneously interpreted by a deaf-language interpreter in the studio. On the Saturday I watched, this interpreted was in fact a monsignor from the Catholic Church - a telling symbol for the mediating role played by the Church between State and the inarticulate. My friends were a bit reluctant to talk about the position of the Church in Poland, confining themselves to the remark that it takes on a valuable Red Cross / Amnesty International type of work. Perhaps. But I find it impossible to forget that it is the same Church that is causing so much misery in at least two continents elsewhere in the world.

My visit happened to coincide, after the news, with a Eurovision Song Contest-type competition for the best song or performer from a socialist country. Once bitten and all that, my friends didn't want to watch it, but for me it was fascinating. Two highlights are worth mentioning:

- a major from the GDR Peoples' Army singing a Hurrah-Socialism song along the lines of "Socialism will conquer the world one day, oompah, oompah", which was just too bad to be true;
- a corporal from the Bulgarian Peoples' Army, also in uniform, singing a disco-funky number which (believe it or not) was passably very good, if you like that sort of thing.

On other occasions I heard a Polish Country & Western outfit and a Polish Blues Band - both were excellent. Now, if a Bulgarian corporal can produce "good" disco music and a Polish blues band can provide "authentic"-sounding blues, what does this tell us about the nature of entertainment supposedly indigenous to the USA? And if the Polish military/Stalinist government believes, as it obviously does, that the lid can be kept on the boiling Polish pot by simply providing "Western" entertainment in the forms of film, disco, video, rock and TV, then what is the function and effect of the media in Britain?

Draw your own conclusions.

Mephistopheles

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

official Government press but, nevertheless, since the declaration of Martial Law in 1981, he always provokatively includes the address of his press in his books!

On average the underground presses publish several books a year; only "Nowa" and "Krag" manage more than 10. The subject matter is: censored Polish literature, emigre literature, the Soviet dissidents and those of other socialist States, Solzhenitsin, Bukowski, Amalryc and the Western anti-totalitarian works such as Orwell's 1984.

A second group of underground books examine recent international and Polish history from both theoretical and memoir points of view - both in the Polish original and in translation - whilst a third group consists of exclusively theoretical, philosophical, sociological and political discourses criticising communist and Marxist-Leninist ideology. Worth singling out here are the names of Popper, Kolakowski and Nowak.

These underground books have a circulation of basically a few thousand - though exceptionally more than 10,000 might be printed. Typically, they are all printed in the lower case which, while making the reading more difficult, does save space otherwise taken up by

upper case letters. (Translator's Note: I once counted 57 typewritten lower case lines on an A4 bulletin sheet - it was pretty daunting.)

A good 70% of these underground presses are centred in Warsaw, though Krakow and Breslau also have a significant role to play. In Gdansk the presses operating underground publish mostly bulletins.

The chief aftermath of Solidarnosc would therefore appear to be, apart from its function as financial safety-net, a flourishing and informative outlet for material otherwise suppressed by the Polish Government.

Jakub B

September 1985

REVIEWS

the great cities: is this a long winter or are we in the first years of an ice-age?"

Of the three issues which we've seen, number 2 is the most interesting. It's almost entirely devoted to a reconsideration of the communist movement over the past 150 years, with a detailed discussion of the activities in the 60s and 70s in which the editors of the journal (including Jean Barrot) were involved.

From our correspondents at L'Insecurite Sociale (BP243, 75564 Paris Cedex 12) have come a number of short texts in English ("On Organisation", "Unions" and "The Nation State") as well as a series of longer articles critiquing anarchism, the commodity system, etc.

Libertarian Education is

expected to include material on the current teachers' pay disputes, the new exams and ways of combatting racism in schools. Subscriptions (£2) and information from The Cottage, The Green, Leire, Lutterworth, Leics.

La Banquise (20F from BP no.214, 75623 Paris Cedex 13) is a French language journal using the image of glaciation to describe the current situation "in which a social movement is partially frozen. For 15 years there have been only the initial skirmishes, at a time of rampant cretinism and the threat of war. The recent period is characterised by a reflux in the class struggle in

THE NOMENKLATURIST STATE

A question that is always bound to get a good argument going is this: Is the Soviet Union a Communist, Capitalist or "State Capitalist" nation? This question is still a very important one, and, as yet, no one has come up with the definitive answer.

A book written by Russian exile Michael Voslensky (originally published in 1980 by Bodley Head) supplies us with a vast amount of fascinating information that suggests that the Soviet Union does not fit into any of these categories. Voslensky was in a good position to make his assessment as he was a member of the ruling Soviet bureaucracy for 25 years. His book is called "Nomenklatura".

According to Voslensky, the USSR is not ruled by a mere elite, but by a new and unique class - the Nomenklatura. He tells us that the primary meaning of the word nomenklatura is (1) list of key positions, appointments to which are made by higher authorities in the party; and (2) lists of persons appointed to those positions or held in reserve for them. But also, more importantly, nomenklatura is what the members of this new class call themselves.

The Origins of the Nomenklatura

Voslensky summarizes this feat of creation very succinctly: "Lenin the revolutionary created the organization of professional revolutionaries; Stalin the apparatchik created the nomenklatura." It was Lenin who laid the seeds of the new class, and Stalin who brought it to full flower. Lenin's organization of professional revolutionaries was numerically too weak to govern by itself and fill all the responsible positions in the rapidly expanding party and state apparatus, but they were not short of applicants for these jobs. The major selection criterion used was the political qualifications of the applicants, professional aptitude being of secondary importance.

Voslensky states that "it seems to be necessary to socialism to give jobs to people with little or no qualifications for the work involved." The explanation for this is that "Everyone has to be aware of the fact that he has his job not by right but as a favor done to him by his superiors, and that he can be just as easily replaced if that favor is withdrawn."

This was the scene as it was set by Lenin. After his demise, Stalin began to manoeuvre, and succeeded in concentrating all appointments to key positions in the country under his control. Lenin's selection methods produced an apparatus of people completely subservient to the will of their superiors, and Stalin used this to assure himself of the complete devotion of the whole of this new ruling class, the nomenklatura.

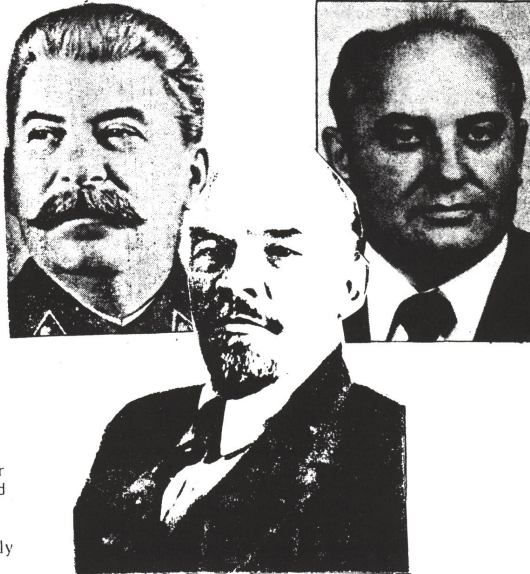
The birth of this new ruling class was a three stage process: firstly, with the formation of the organization of professional revolutionaries, the embryo of the new class; secondly, the seizure of power by that organization in 1917, leading to the establishment of a two-tier leadership of the Leninist old guard and the Stalinist nomenklatura; and thirdly, the liquidation of the Leninist old guard by the nomenklatura during the Great Purge.

The Nomenklatura Today - Their Raison D'Etre and Organization

Voslensky argues that the nomenklatura followed a very different path to power than that of the capitalists. Capitalists, he says, had economic power which

led to the seizure of state power. In the case of the nomenklatura it was the opposite route that was taken. State power led to the seizure of economic power. Unlike capitalists, the nomenklatura are not property owners, but administrators. For the nomenklatura the possession of property or wealth is not what drives them; their *raison d'etre* is the possession of power.

In the USSR the ruling class denies its own existence, and tries to pass itself off as part of an administrative machine such as exists in every country in the world. But the controlling class must know who its members are. That is the reason for the existence of the nomenklatura. The selection process for entry into this class operates in complete secrecy and is still run under the criteria laid down by Lenin. These are: (1) reliability, (2) political aptitude, (3) qualifications for the job, and (4) administrative ability.



Voslensky informs us that once one is accepted into the nomenklatura, one is there for life. Even its disgraced members still live apart from the rest of the population, the most general punishment being that of a downgrading to a lesser post. He also detects a more recent phenomenon in the nomenklatura: self-reproduction. Every holder of a nomenklatura post is given a deputy whose name is entered on a reserve list. When the post becomes vacant, the committee concerned decides whether to appoint the deputy, and if he is appointed a new name appears on the list. More and more it is the sons and daughters of nomenklaturists who are appearing on these reserve lists. (It is also these same sons and daughters who are given access to the best educational establishments in the USSR, unlike the rest of the population; another guarantee

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of continuing privilege.)

Voslensky also detects a resemblance between the nomenklaturist system and the feudal system. "The nomenklatura is a bastard kind of feudalism; every nomenklaturist is granted a fief, just as every vassal is granted a fief by the crown...The nomenklatura fief is power. In feudal Russia it used to be said that a vassal was 'invested' with a town or region by his sovereign. Nowadays they say in the nomenklatura that Comrade X or Y has been 'invested' with a ministry or a region."

He gives many examples in his book of how nomenklaturists are given almost unlimited power within their prescribed area, and this does give the impression of a pseudo-feudal system. It is a theory that appears more than once in Voslensky's book, and is worthy of further investigation.

Is the Nomenklatura an Exploiting Class?

There is a series of political jokes in the Soviet Union in the form of questions to and responses of the Armenian radio station. One of them runs like this: "Capitalism is the exploitation of man by man. And what is socialism? they ask. Socialism is the opposite, we reply."

The process that took place in the USSR of liquidating private property and turning it into socialist property was, according to Voslensky, "merely a transfer of all the country's wealth to the new ruling class." He then puts forward a detailed argument to prove that the nomenklatura also appropriates the surplus value created by the workers. (One of the strong points of this book is that Voslensky continually analyses the USSR from a Marxist, rather than a pro-western, standpoint.) He also finds a "fundamental contradiction" in Soviet society, namely that the nomenklatura endeavors by economic means to assure the security and maximum extension of its own power. Meanwhile the working population's aim is to produce goods for consumption by itself, not by the nomenklatura. This leads to class antagonism within the USSR, though on a necessarily limited scale.

Voslensky then returns to his "feudal" theme when he states that workers cannot change their employer, for the only employer is the state, and emigration is practically forbidden, and even job changes are frowned upon. Indeed, peasants still do not have the right to leave their kolkhoz. "Thus," says Voslensky, "the nomenklatura has resuscitated precapitalist working conditions."

Drawing heavily on the writings of Svetlana Stalin, Voslensky then describes how the nomenklatura enjoy their power and wealth. At the top of the pile the senior nomenklaturists live in the mansions that belonged formerly to the Russian aristocracy. They have also taken to building special "rest homes", heavily guarded but luxurious holiday homes, in the most fashionable resorts. Reading his descriptions, one gets the impression that these nomenklaturists live as well and as lazily as the richest American multi-millionaires. However, unlike these millionaires the nomenklaturists do not pay a single rouble for these privileges: it is all paid for by the state.

There is also a network of hidden salaries and "responsibility" payments which separate the nomenklaturists from the rest. And all this extra money can be spent in special shops full of the best food the USSR can produce (and also some of the best imported food and goods). Of course, only members of the nomenklatura have access to these shops.

The Nomenklaturist State

The clearest message from Voslensky's book is

that today's Soviet Union is definitely not communist. But the description "State Capitalist", used by many on the left seems, in the light of this book, to be an inadequate description. Freelance journalist Neal Ascherson's term "State Monopoly Capitalist" appears to be closer to the truth. The nomenklatura is something new and unique. A gigantic bureaucracy which is both inefficient and massively efficient at the same time.

Voslensky's book should be used as the starting point for a new effort to fully understand the Soviet Union. And his interesting pseudo-feudalist theories would make a good starting point for discussion.

Alexander 5/12/85.



(Postscript: At the end of his book Voslensky suggests that the nomenklatura system is in an irreversible decline. An article in the Guardian of January 2, 1986, seems to confirm this statement. The journalist Martin Walker tells us that "Ever since 1917, Soviet economic planners have been able to count on an unending supply of raw materials, on ever growing mountains of iron and cement and plastics coming from the factories. There has been a lavishness and a profligacy about the Soviet economy that even this country can no longer afford."

"In the ten years up to 1980, each extra one per cent in the Soviet GNP required 1.4 per cent increase in investment, 1.2 per cent increase in raw materials and 0.2 per cent increase in the labour force. They were having to spend more and more to get less growth, at a time when oil production began to stagnate, the labour force looks like declining, and the military are agitating for the investment to match the Americans in a new arms race."

This, of course, adversely affects the living standards of the nomenklatura. Gorbachov is already beginning to introduce economic reforms. For instance, profit sharing and incentive schemes are being introduced into manufacturing industry. Perhaps Neal Ascherson's other interesting statement, that the economic and political systems of the Soviet Union and the West are rapidly converging, contains more than a grain of truth.)

SELFHOOD COMMUNITY AND CAPITAL

CHRISTOPHER LASCH AND
CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

ONE of the main points of criticism made concerning the first two editions of *Here & Now* has related to a detection of the influence by Christopher Lasch's book, *The Culture of narcissism*.

It is indeed true that some of us have read that book & found it to contain a lot of worthwhile criticism, while others have felt that it is badly argued or just plain wrong. Such different positions, insofar as they can highlight different perspectives on the nature of modern societies and prospects for change, are worth further exploration. The recent British publication of Lasch's most recent book, *The Minimal Self* gives us a focal point for such an exploration.

The background of Lasch's books is very much that of the failure of the various radical movements of the late-60's & early 70's to effect anything like meaningful change. Were that all that had occurred, that failure could be passed off as a temporary setback due only to lack of numbers or resources, excess of illusions, or lack of influence in the right institutions, with the implication that things will be different next time. For Lasch, however, it is the very compromises & 'progressive' reforms of that period which have increased dependence on commodity & State and reduced the possibility of individual & collective autonomous action.

The psychological term 'narcissism' was applied to the most obvious manifestations of this failure in the mid-70's: the 'Me Generation' hedonists & their pursuit of self-liberation. Lasch pointed to the contradictory qualities implied in the term as Freud used it, in that it was "an overwhelming desire to live in a state of ecstatic freedom from desire" [MS, p.182]. He described the narcissist's traits as "dependence on the vicarious warmth provided by others combined with a fear of dependence, a sense of inner emptiness, boundless repressed rage & unsatisfied oral cravings", along with such secondary traits as "pseudo-self-insight, calculated seductiveness, nervous self-deprecatory humour" [CofN, p. 74]



It is in contemporary cults, which are "therapeutic not religious" [Cof N, p.33], that such traits are most obvious. However, Lasch argued that these traits permeated the whole culture: where the problems brought to Freud were largely those of hysteria, an obvious product of the Austro-Germanic society of 1900, the problems brought to modern psychotherapists (& cult gurus) are those of adjusting one's 'personality' to modern society. What are the social developments which have paralleled this change?

"Three lines of social & cultural development stand out as particularly important in the encouragement of a narcissistic orientation to experience: the emergence of the egalitarian family, so called; the child's increased exposure to other socialising agencies besides the family; & the general effect of modern mass culture in breaking down distinctions between illusions & reality" [MS, p.185]

Following Freud, Lasch sees the development of a proper sense of 'selfhood' as requiring the child overcoming the contradictory feelings of love & hate towards its parents & abandoning the desire for a return to the womb (or at least their sublimation in the works of civilisation). Lasch locates the desire for absorption with nature in the *Ego Ideal* and the unresolved parental images in the *Superego*, and argues that modern conditions, both within family relations & mass culture, have subverted the possibility of a

correct resolution, leaving the narcissistic individual oscillating between an omnipotent over-investment in images & commodities & a nihilistic self-hatred.

Lacking any outside standards against which to measure himself/herself, the individual can find self-esteem only in that reflected by the regard of someone else, the mirror of society which becomes only "a projection of one's own fears & desires": Rather than being "grasping & assertive", as it would first seem, the narcissist is actually "weak & dependent" [MS, p.33].

The Culture of Narcissism therefore explored areas in which Lasch felt that egalitarian reforms had assisted the formation of narcissistic individuals, criticising 'progressive' schooling methods & leftist dislike of competitive sport because they encouraged & accelerated the substitution of norms for standards (whose finest expression is in the public opinion poll). Such emphases, along with the fact that the book remains very much on the level of individual psychology & can seem nostalgic for some Golden Age somewhere in the near but distant past, led to its being coolly received by many on the Left, who saw in it only a conservatism speaking the language of critical theory.

The Minimal Self can therefore be seen as an attempt to clear up some of the misunderstandings which had arisen concerning the earlier book.

Most immediately, there is much less use of the term 'narcissism', whose very ambivalence had led to much of the confusion as well as to the earlier book's success, given that it probably sold many of its copies at the intersection between the markets for therapeutic pseudo-psychology (ironically) & that for the naming & description of trends & subcultures (eg Sloane Rangers, Yuppies, etc).

The new book's strength is that it makes much more explicit that what is in question is not a syndrome to be 'cured' by some therapy but a particular type of personality formation elicited by developments in the interlocked areas of mass consumption & mass production in 'an age of diminished expectations' or of 'troubled times' (as the subtitles to the two books put it).

Rather than bemoan loss of parental authority in the home, he explores the changes in industrial society in the 20th century as they have affected individuals:

"It is part of a shift to a manipulative therapeutic, 'pluralistic' & non-judgemental style of social discipline that originated...with the rise of a professional & managerial class...& spread...into the political realm as a whole...[M]anagerial control of the workforce created a passive workforce, excluded from decisions about the design & execution of production...[T]he promotion of consumption as a way of life came to be seen as a means of easing industrial unrest. But the conversion of the worker into a consumer of commodities was soon followed by his conversion into a consumer of therapies designed to ease his 'adjustment' to the realities of industrial life [MS, p.46].

Such a link between the parts of the day in which capital is produced, reproduced and consumed is crucial if the argument is not to lead to the advocacy of one more therapy.

Much of the book consists of analyses showing the pervasiveness of concern about 'survival' in contemporary society & its elevation by some into the main value, with no regard for what is to survive and for what. The situation is that of a self threatened by psychic annihilation from within because of its uncertainty about its own status, & a species threatened by nuclear annihilation, if not exactly from without, certainly from without any real control. As Adorno & Horkheimer noted in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the end result of the project of controlling nature eventually comes to confront us as something just as fearful and uncontrollable as nature had ever seemed.

as in the previous book, the basic point (in this case preoccupation with survival) is hammered home with copious examples drawn from every area of mass culture. There are the 'Survival Guides' addressed to

all manner of stereotyped 'individuals'. There are the survivalists prepared to defend mankind's heritage after the Bomb by taking to the hills & becoming barbarians. Despite our immediate tendency to dismiss most such examples as expressing only American idiocy (and opinions in Europe about American intelligence have never been lower), Lasch is probably right to treat these as symptoms of a deeper malaise. Obsession with survival (& therefore with death) signals an inner insecurity, as does the use of the analogy of survival in Nazi Death Camps to draw the erroneous inference that one can only survive in contemporary society by withdrawing from all human contact not for immediate gain (thus really instituting a 'war of all against all').

Lasch then embarks on a review of the ways in which he sees these tendencies finding expression in the arts, as attempts to 'recapture a sense of psychic oneness without taking any account of the obstacles, psychic or material, that lie in the way of that oneness' [MS p165]. Although his use of the term 'minimalism' to cover such diverse people as Carl Andre, J.G. Ballard, John Cage, Merce Cunningham & Thomas Pynchon is in appropriate, his discussion does at least force the reader to ask just what it is that is attractive in the deliberate loss of control or infinite deferral of meaning in some of these people's works. Curiously, some of this is the very same material whose arbitrary flow of signifiers is glorified by post-modern critics! His focus in this section on J.G. Ballard's stories from *The Atrocity Exhibition* is well-chosen, given the intimate connection between Ballard's suburban fantasies of the disaster shattering the everyday world & the decentred individual lost in consumer society.

Having again emphasised the incompleteness of the modern individual, Lasch discusses previous attempts to recognise & remove this incompleteness, such as the theories of Herbert Marcuse & Norman O. Brown. (Lasch's discussion of the latter would appear to have renewed interest in him. Lasch has contributed an introduction to a new edition of *Love Against Death*). He argues that neither arrived at a satisfactory resolution of the question of the human in society, a resolution which can be built only on a selfhood which recognises the impossibility of either merging with or dominating nature, the two desires of narcissism.

Lasch's discussion of society This discussion leads into an attempt to discuss contemporary social concerns by projecting various positions onto Freud's structural theory of the mind. Conservative and liberal attempts at social reform are summarised under the headings of

The Party of the Superego (those who want more punitive social controls) and *The Party of the Ego* (those who want to encourage rational and responsible behaviour). Lasch then proposes a *Party of Narcissus*, which would cover those movements influenced by feminism: such as the peace & environmental movements and the women's movement itself.

Lasch 'believe[s] in the goals of these movements and join[s] in their demand for a realignment of political forces, an abandonment of the old political ideologies & a reorientation of values' [MS, p253]. However, by proposing a model setting 'male' values to one side and 'female' ones to the other (which can be seen in slogans like 'Take the toys from the boys'!), by celebrating an irrational refusal with nature (the Ego Ideal) and denigrating domination over nature (the Superego), they are failing to go beyond narcissism, and it is that which he believes to be necessary if a social movement is to achieve anything other than a reinforcement of capitalism.

The most irritating thing about reading Lasch's books, and what makes his arguments so difficult to pin down, is the sheer quantity of his examples (a tribute to his researchers!). That they are almost all drawn from 'mass culture' which makes us feel that they are in some way unworthy of discussion. A precedent for Lasch's books (& one by a writer whose stance Lasch broadly shares) is Adorno's 1957 study of newspaper astrology columns, *The Stars Down to Earth*, in which that writer defended his choice of subject by stating 'the absence of ultimate seriousness...makes such phenomena by no means less serious with regard to their social implications'. (Adorno also used the term 'narcissism' to describe the consumption of astrological advice, although his usage was a lot less rigorous than Lasch's).

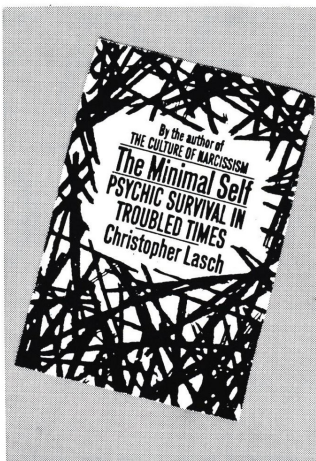
Lasch has by no means abandoned his insistence on the need for authority & standards in the development of a sense of self if any radical movement is to succeed. However, he has now distanced himself much more explicitly from any 'Black Paper on Education' type of conservative criticism, particularly by insisting on the linkage between production relations and the forms of consumption and family relations (a linkage falling far short of a determination), thus setting the emergence of narcissism within the development of capital.

However, it is just this greater historicisation of typical personality traits which points to real restrictions in his outlook: everything comes down to the resolution of the Oedipus complex; the range of possible personality types seem to be set out between the bourgeois family of 1920 and the narcissistic family of

today; there is but one form of internalisation of parental images and its resolution has but one form. This is almost a subjectivised form of those objective theories of the decadence of capitalism since 1917. We can instead propose that, whatever the validity of Freud's theory in 1920 (& perhaps more crucially, in forming the modern world) or Lasch's in 1985, there remains the possibility for some other resolution in a society with different family relations and where much of the adaption to therality principle and abandonment of illusions of omnipotence would not be linked with the need to accept an economy of waged labour & commodity consumption.

While there are some problems in the separate derivations of 'authoritarian' & 'authoritative' from the concept of authority (eg 'Knowledge is Power') we have to accept a certain possibility of the latter without the former (as opposed to the sundry anarchists for whom both are indissolubly linked and must be suppressed - or at least better not talked about).

Although Lasch's arguments rest heavily on a use of Freud's structural model and the arguments of some contemporary Freudian-feminists, his distinction between the *Ego Ideal* & the *Superego* (as the gap of narcissism which must be closed) doesn't seem to be sustained by Freud himself. Freud first introduced the term '*Ego Ideal*' in his essay, *On Narcissism: an Introduction*, where it served as the first approximation towards what was to become the '*Superego*' in his revised structural theory of the mind. Nor does he seem to have made any distinction between the two latter: both the *Superego* & the *Ego Ideal* are described as "the heir of the Oedipus Complex" in "the ego & the ID" (in Chapters III & V) respectively), and the *Superego* is later described as "the vehicle of the *Ego Ideal*" in the lecture on *The Dissection of*



the Personality. Although it would obscure the elegance of the psychopolitical model proposed in the last chapter of *The Minimal Self*, the superego must surely remain an ambivalence, which may be lost when an almost-solely biologically determined *Ego Ideal* is introduced. Nor does Lasch's psycho-political model seem to bring much increased understanding of the forces at work in society - in this respect it resembles those periodic attempts to redraw the 'Left/Right' political line with a second dimension of '*libertarian-Authoritarian*'.

The continuing relevance of the Freudian model can be seen in the recent controversy over the question of Freud's abandonment of *Seduction Theory* for a theorisation of phantasy and symbolism, or whether this was a failure on his part to accept the 'truth' that his hysterical patients had indeed been sexually-

assaulted by their fathers. After having been suggested by Masson this idea seems to be rapidly becoming a feminist commonplace. In association with press hysteria over child-killings within the family, this would seem to imply the 'need' for greater policing within the family, for more specialists who can ensure that each family conforms to an 'objective' norm.

Our most obvious parting of the ways with Lasch would be in his equation of socialism with participation & democratic controls in public and industrial life. Much of what he suggests here recalls the ideal of New England community life, a restatement of the values on which America was founded, values corresponding to a previous phase of capitalism to which there is no return. The traits which he associates with narcissism seem to us to be ineradicable while the commodity form is maintained in any way. Indeed capitalism itself tries to elicit such '*checks & balances*' and condemns '*apathy*' in public life (while ensuring that any initiatives which so take place stay well within the bounds of representation).

It is interesting that Lasch's books are so badly received on a Left where such participation is also the ideal. This is because that Left has taken as its own those very therapeutic, managerial agencies which he criticises for *reducing* scope for autonomy and have convinced themselves that their activities in these agencies are socialist in inspiration, socialist in action & effect. Not only do Lasch's books contain a negative description of these activities, but they also paint a silhouette of their lifestyles as free-floating individuals pretending to have created themselves from nothing and seeking confirmation of their existence and importance in '*alternative*' movements and communities dominated by a tyrannical consensus.

A.D.

REVIEWS.

Kick It Over (\$7.50 for 4 issues from PO Box 5811, Station A, Toronto, Ontario, M5W 1P7). Nos.13/14 feature a two-part interview with Murray Bookchin. The first part focusses on new technology and the decline of the workers movement and the potential for radicalism in the "information-centred economy". The second part covers his advocacy of "democratising the republic" and detaching grassroots democracy from service to Capitalism and the Nation State.

There's an assessment of the contradictory ideas in the German Green Party and why attempts to set up such parties elsewhere are often mechanical and authoritarian since they don't stem (as in West Germany) from prolonged mass commitment to extra-parliamentary protest. (In relation to this, see also "The Greening of Italy" in the same issue). There's also "The True Story of Sandino" converging the syndicalist leanings of the godfather of the Sandinistas. In common with other North American papers, there are also articles from the radical wing of insurgent Red Indians.

Seduced and Abandoned (from Stonemoss Press, PO Box 81, Glebe, NSW 2037, Australia) is a pamphlet in which various writers try to come to terms with "the Baudrillard Scene": the taking-up of Jean Baudrillard by the English-speaking "radical" art-world in the past five years. While some of the contributors try to site the use of Baudrillard within the debates and institutions in the Australian art-world, others point to his use of particular sentence-structures and metaphors to put his argument across (or seem to put it across). We hope to return to Baudrillard and his critique of politics in the next issue of H&N.

HERE & NOW

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